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ABSTRACT

This document is one of two monographs produced by a three-year project designed to study mid-career changes and the educational and training needs of these adults. A companion monograph, CE 025 226, discusses support systems organized at the local level to serve the mid-career adult student. Divided into four chapters, this document describes the characteristics of mid-career adult students in terms of their previous education and work experiences, their present and proposed life and work transitions, their goals and ambitions, and their experiences in planning personal programs to help them accomplish their objectives. Chapter 1 discusses the research base and purposes of the mid-career change study. Chapter 2 describes the environments of change based on the responses of over one thousand adult students who were surveyed in the study. Chapter 3 discusses the characteristics of the mid-career-change adult student. The final chapter summarizes the findings of the survey under the following topics: planning for career change: attitudes about career change: ages and life-work transitions: and career goals and directions of change. (For a full project report of the three-year study, see CE 025 227.) (BM)

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MID-CAREER CHANGE: Life and Work

Transitions and Reentry into Education

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CE 025 228

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I

INTRODUCTORY

In October, 1975, the authors of this monograph launched a major research and development effort aimed at probing the phenomenon of mid-career changes and the challenge confronting educators who provide the education and training needs of this new student clientele. This effort resulted in a project conducted at the University of California campuses at Davis and Berkeley entitled: MID-CAREER CHANGE: Adult Students in Mid-Career Transitions and Community Support Systems Developed to Meet Their Needs (Paltridge, Regan, Terkla, 1978). It was sponsored by the Special Community Services and Continuing Education Program in the U.S. Office of Education Bureau of Postsecondary Education and was funded under the discretionary funds of Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Dr. J. Eugene Welden, then Chief of that program, was the USOE Project Officer and lent valuable assistance to its conduct.

The principal products of this effort are two monographs. The first of these dealt with community support systems (Paltridge, Regan,Terkla, 1980). Local organizations were looked upon as centers for a consumer movement wherein adults at mid-career were seeking educational information, career advice, and access to postsecondary education and training which would enable them to reenter the job market or successfully cope with enforced or voluntary changes of work and life-style. These organizations, furthermore, were in a position to make major contributions to the economic and social well-being of their communities by decreasing unemployment and by producing a better-education citizenry. Case studies of seven such organizations in widely separate parts of the country and in markedly different economic and social environments

were reviewed, and from these data a set of alternative models for effective community-educator-adult student relationships was devised.

This, the second monograph deals with the mid-career persons, the forces which encourage or demand life and career changes, reentry into education, and the purposes and ultimate goals of mid-career adult students. It presents these data in terms of their implications for educational and training institutions.

The Research Base

The basic plan of the project was to conduct a series of seven case studies of communities in which organized and cooperative effort was being made at the community level to improve the availability of postsecondary continuing education for mid-career reentry adult students.

The seven case study communities were deliberately chosen to provide illustrations of different types of community organizations functioning in different types of community environments. The seven are: Rochester, Minnesota; Omak-Okanogan County, Washington; Chico-Northeastern California; St. Albans-Grand Isle, Vermont; Providence, Rhode Island; Syracuse, New York; and Nassau-Suffolk counties, Long Island, New York. Three were predominantly rural areas with small towns and villages isolated from each other and from centers of existing educational resources by mountainous terrains, winter snows, and long traveling distances. Three were major metropolitan areas with abundant educational resources, but their institutions had problems communicating with all segments of the population--particularly with minority ethnic groups, the undereducated, the unemployed, and the underemployed, who were in most need of support services. These people in particular need information on education and training opportunities, occupational counseling, educational planning and

guidance, sources of financial aid, and job placement. One community was a reasonably affluent medium-sized metropolitan area that had previously lacked facilities with which to provide its adult citizens with a four-year degree opportunity, advanced technical training, or occupation-oriented master's degrees, all of which were in great demand.

The Project Team spent several days in each of these seven communities conducting structured interviews and gathering data on the history, form, membership, and activities of the local community organization, investigating the educational and training resources and facilities which offer programs for mid-career persons, and making arrangements for the later mailed questionnaire survey of a sample of the mid-career students enrolled in educational or training programs in the area. In each case, the state capitol was visited to conduct further inquiries about the nature of state policies supportive of continuing education for adults.

Research Purposes

The survey of mid-career students was designed to serve three purposes: (1) To gather descriptive information on the students in each area--their personal characteristics, their present occupations,their educational goals, and their career goals. (2) To evaluate their personal experiences as "reentry students," the accomodations they found to their needs for part-time programs, the days and hours of class schedules, financial aid, and educational programs tailored to their needs, and the availability and value of counselling services. (3) To add to previous research on mid-career students, and institutional accommodations to these students' needs.

The questionnaire instrument was developed in collaboration with members of the project's advisory committee and faculty members and other associates

of the project's co-directors at the University of California at Berkeley and Davis, and colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where Professor Regan spent a sabbatical leave during the planning stages of the project. The instrument was pre-tested in two very different settings--in a rural area in Northern California and with a group of adult graduate students in business administration in downtown San Francisco. After final revisions had been made, the instrument was mailed to between 300 and 400 adult students in each of the seven case study communities. Approximately 42 percent of the total sample was returned as completed responses.

The student data were first analyzed for descriptive and demographic information for the case studies and for feedback reports to each of the seven community organizations. The findings were then analyzed for types of changes experienced by the mid-career population and for evidence of satisfaction with programs, counselling, and other assistance.

The survey revealed a markedly different student clientele from that served historically by traditional postsecondary educational institutions. The average age of these students (38 years) was nearly twenty years older, and they ranged in age through a span of three or four decades. Most were married and rearing and supporting children. They were from widely differing income levels. Their prior educational attainments ranged from uncompleted school grades to graduate collegiate degrees. Most were holding full-time or part-time jobs while attending school.

Understanding the educational needs of these students and providing educational services which met these needs and at the same time accomodated the personal requirements of such a diverse clientele called for new forms of organizational planning and non-traditional methods of education delivery on the part of public and private postsecondary educational institutions.

II

ENVIRONMENTS OF CHANGE

"The goals I have had must be pursued now, or lost. I'm not getting any younger. I wish to finish college--which is difficult in this area of such limited facilities--and work at something more personally satisfying..." Respondent 2040, female.

"When I get my BA in Business Adminstration I plan to do graduate work. A degree to me means dollars and cents. I would some day like a business of my own. I am satisfied with my family life, but not satisfied with my position in my company. I still think much of life revolves around a decent salary." Respondent 3051, male.

"I have an AA (Associate in Arts) degree. That is not enough for advancement. I have recently been divorced and I am now responsible for a home and two children--and I need to find a new place in society and a new occupation." Respondent 2376, female.

"I will be using my technical and business background to enter the alternate energy consulting field. I feel I needed a change from the routine after a number of years on the same job, a person's originality and challenge become unused." Respondent 7024, male.

"I have quit work as an RN to return to school full-time and acquire a BA in Psychology and then go for my MA. I looked at

my life and the rut I was in and decided it was time to change to something more fulfilling." Respondent 3055, female.

"My outlook and feelings about life are changing for the better. A whole new and very interesting career is starting to unfold for me." Respondent 7016, male.

"Only just reentering the job market after 17 years. Displaced homemaker, with seven minor children." Respondent 3120, female.

"I intend to return to school and learn how not to starve. Employers are reluctant to hire anyone my age for anything but temporary or grunt jobs." Respondent 1005, male.

These are very real people, and these autobiographic comments are not at all untypical of those of hundreds upon hundreds of mid-career persons from Vermont, New York, and Rhode Island, to Minnesota and Washington and California who were involved in the Mid-Career Change Study.

The phenomenon of changing careers during adulthood has been recognized only in recent years as a rightful part of the process of continuous growth and development which extends through a lifetime. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of adult mid-career persons reentering some form of postsecondary education or training has increased dramatically.

The "back-to-school" movement embraces aerospace physicists, engineers, and technicians who are changing their career-lines to business, industry, or the academic world. Accountants are changing to computer specialists. School teachers are changing to other public service careers. Lumberjacks are going back to school to get high school diplomas and a year or two of college so

that they can qualify for a job in law enforcement. Women who are thirty and over are preparing themselves for reentry into careers in business, health services, and a broad range of professional and para-professional occupations. Thousands more are returning to educational institutions to fulfill their desire for a more informed understanding of themselves and the environment in which they live.

Mid-career change may be the best, and perhaps the only, solution for unemployment crises induced by technological and economic changes in the workforce requirements of industry (O'Toole, 1973). It is seen, as well, as a solution for the socio-psychological "mid-career crises" induced by personal discontent with career-lines and life styles that do not fulfill expected satisfactions in daily living (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1974).

Commitment to one lifelong occupation is no longer as feasible--nor, perhaps, as desirable--as in the past. "Once a coal miner, always a coal miner" is no longer a valid description in an age when the mine is likely to close down and "hardrock miners" will no longer be needed because future sources of coal will come from strip mines which employ engineers, earth-moving equipment operators, and truck drivers instead of "miners." New public priorities such as improving health care, increasing efforts to clean up the environment and rebuild cities, create new demands for people with new skills. These changes are rapid. The economy's need for a particular skill can double or be reduced by half in twenty years--about half the length of an average career (O'Toole, 1973).

The number of workers undergoing mid-career changes is likely to increase for the remainder of this century. For one thing, workers are living longer and therefore can be expected to have a longer working life. A forty year

working life is a great amount of time to devote to a single career. With slow-down of the birthrate, the median age of Americans is advancing. According to the Federal Bureau of the Census, it has increased from 20.0 to 29.4 in the last six years, and it will reach 32.5 before the year 2000. Likewise, the number of workers in their 40s and 50s is increasing and will continue to increase. The number 65 years of age and over is already up to 10 percent, more than triple what it was at the opening of this century. Already, laws eliminating mandatory retirement and outlawing age discrimination have been embodied in federal and state laws.

The rising general level of education of the American population and the increased interest in public issues related to the environment, physical and mental health, and social problems of the cities has increased aspirations for changes to careers related to public service. The frustrations of people over the quality of working life, particularly among workers with high aspirations who are in low-level jobs, is resulting in voluntary efforts to improve one's lot through change of careers. For such persons a career change can be an avenue to social mobility, job satisfaction, and self-actualization. In one study of blue collar workers 40 and over, it was found that nearly 40 percent have thought seriously about making an effort to enter a different occupation and they would enter an education program to acquire new skills if such a program were available that promised a reasonable living allowance (Sheppard and Herrick, 1972).

There are several ways occupational mobility can be made easier and less traumatic. Making private pension plans more easily portable from one occupation to another can help to some extent. For people who are blocked as a consequence of sex or race discrimination, mobility can be facilitated by

affirmative action programs. But continuing education and training for advanced skills or new skills remain the principal avenues for occupational mobility, thereby enhancing the welfare and the satisfaction of persons in mid-career who by reason of job circumstances or other personal decisions desire to make either a shift or a major change in their career line.

Valid justification can be advanced for the thesis that the welfare of the general society can be served if society assumes the responsibility for making sure that continuing education and job training programs are continuously available to all citizens of all ages (Wirtz, 1975). The economy of the marketplace can be improved during times of economic distress by decreasing unemployment. Local industry can prosper if it has available a pool of trained and experienced persons for employment. People will be more content with the course of their lives and more willing to stay in their community and support its business and cultural life. The civic life of the community will benefit from a better-educated and more responsible citizenry. The quality of life, which sets the tone for the community as a whole, can be enhanced.

The local community is the focal point for the development of a mid-career program and for making certain that there is ample opportunity for all citizens seeking the opportunity for more education and training. This education and training service cannot be provided by institutions distant from the home or work place by more than 30 to 50 minutes of comuting time. If mid-career people are to take advantage of these opportunities, they must be available at times and places that are convenient to their work schedules, homes and family responsibilities. Thus, the responsibility falls on the community-based organization to make certain that adequate resources are present, that information is widely disseminated, and that adequate support

services--such as career and financial counselling--are available.

Mid-career changers are being influenced by two separate, but usually inter-related environments. As citizens of a community and nation with changing societal norms as well as changing economic and technological conditions in the workplace, they are enveloped in an environment which requires or at least encourages work or life changes. These changes affect persons differently and they create a special environment which is very personal to each individual. This personal environment is the product of the circumstances of each person's life and livelihood as they are perceived by that individual.

The two environments--that of the society in general and that of the individual within the larger society--are fundamental to understanding both the phenomenon of life and career change and what can be done to help or ease it and how to channel it for the good of the individuals and for the good of the communities in which they live. As these are examined, the interactions between the two are obvious.

Societal Changes

Societal changes and the global environment which impinges upon the social environment surrounding the individual are sometimes misunderstood by the individual. If changes affect their lives adversely, they may be painfully conscious of the impact of change but perhaps not fully aware of its long-term implications. For example, people lose their jobs because of an economic or technological change in their workplace. They may feel that all they have to do is find a new job, when knowledgeable scrutiny or good advice would tell them that this is the time to change careers before they are too old, or too tired, or too set in their ways.

On the other hand, changes in this global environment may have a liberating effect on the individual and inspire elective life or career changes. The changing role in the family of the educated wife and mother, the broadening role of women in business and government, the effect of shorter work periods and increased leisure pursuits and leisure-oriented businesses--all these can point to new opportunities, new careers, the opportunity to reenter education or training, and elect new life-styles and new working careers.

The global environment of the American society in the late twentieth century is marked by several types of changes which profoundly affect the lives of its citizens. These are among the reasons for individual life and career changes which became evident in the Mid-Career Change Project.

Political changes in international and domestic relationships are having strong impacts on individual lives and livelihoods. Changing international alignments, energy cartels, international trade and monetary exchange, all these are changing working careers and they are profoundly affecting traditional perspectives of life-patterns and norms of morality. Domestic political issues are no longer esoteric; they have become universal concerns of everyday citizens. The demands for accountability of government agencies and their employees are both requiring and creating a better-informed citizenry.

Economic changes--those resulting from international affairs and those resulting from domestic changes--are altering the global environment in which people live out their lives and working careers. Unemployment, underemployment, inflation and shrinking take-home pay have resulted in job upheavals and they have contributed to the increase in two-wage earner families, single-parent families and problems of school-to-work transitions of young people.

Technological changes in the workplace often profoundly affect the

economic environment of individual citizens. Computers and other devices of automation are replacing certain areas of human work and skills. On the other hand, sophisticated technology is creating new work and new careers unheard of only a decade or so ago. Technology is capable of forcing change and it is also capable of creating new work patterns, even of finding replacements for obsolete skills. The booming economy amidst recession and the shortage of trained workers in "Silicone Valley" south of San Francisco is one evidence of the latter.

Individual Environments Change

The last two decades have produced marked changes in environments in which millions of individual Americans find themselves. Many of these changes, to be sure, are related to the movement towards a "post-industrial" society that is technologically more sophisticated and towards an economically more affluent society. Many are also related to the emergence of new perceptions of personal value systems, to the medical advancements in birth control, to increases in leisure time and leisure pursuits, to the expanding American middle class, and to the movements towards "liberation" of women and ethnic minorities.

The milieu of millions of women has shifted from the home to the workplace--for hundreds of different reasons and with hundreds of different life patterns, each singular to the individual. Divorce and single parenthood, the "empty-nest" syndrome, more equal partnership with spouses in economic productivity and family responsibilities, the challenges as well as the opportunities opened up by affirmative action programs--these and other causes have resulted in new individual life-styles and career perceptions.

Job and career mobility--whether through opportunity or necessity--have

changed the personal environments of millions of men and women.

Increased life expectancy, broadened availability of health care services and increased levels of educational attainment have given individuals a new awareness of the quality of life.

All of these forces tend to create for individuals an environment in which change of life-style, change of career, and new perspectives of daily existence can flourish. The willingness to change is encouraged, and advice and assistance to the process of change is more prevalent.

Thus, the circumstances of the social forces working in the last quarter of the twentieth century are shaping the environment for change in which increasing numbers of persons find themselves. These environments, both global and individual, form the background against which the phenomenon of mid-career change was studied in the 1970's.

III

MID-CAREER PERSONS WHO REENTER EDUCATION

The data which follows is based upon comprehensive surveys of over one thousand adult students enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions in each of the seven case study communities. The sample as a whole includes persons in remote rural areas and those in large and medium-sized metropolitan centers. It includes welfare recipients and CETA job trainees as well as relatively affluent graduate students seeking advanced degrees in the health sciences, public administration and business management. Strict random sampling of each of the adult student population segments was not possible, but precautions were taken to include in the study the principal sub-groups in various types of institutions and counseling centers conspicuous in each community. It is to be noted, however, that the survey sample is composed entirely of mid-career persons who are students attending some type of post-secondary institution. The data is not necessarily descriptive of all adults seeking or undergoing life and career changes. Because the programs of most institutions and career counseling centers were strongly career-oriented, adults who enroll in "adult school classes" to pursue leisure-time hobbies or other more casual educational interests are undoubtedly under-represented. However, it will be shown that a significantly large proportion of career-minded adults are reentering education to pursue general education courses to fulfill the desire for personal enrichment and intellectual development not directed to specific occupational goals.

The survey sample is based upon a response rate of 67% women and 33% men. These figures correspond quite closely with the ratios of women and men

adult mid-career students registered in the postsecondary institutions and counseling agencies surveyed in each of the case study communities.

Age

The age distribution of the student respondents ranged from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties with a few in the early seventies. The largest group was in the thirties age bracket. The average age was 38 years. This range and the approximate average age was common to six of the seven communities. In the total sample, a larger percentage of the women than men students were in the older age groups, while a larger percentage of the men students were in the younger age groups.

Table 1

AGE GROUPS

Percentages of Men, Women, and Total Students

	Women	Men	Total
Under 30	20%	25%	22%
30s	36	42	38
40s	26	22	25
50 plus	17	11	15
Average ages:	39 yrs.	36 yrs.	38 yrs.

Significant at .05 level

The Chi Square Test of Significance was applied to data shown in the tables in this chapter. Levels are shown with each table.

Marital and Family Status

While a large majority of the mid-career students were married (80% of the men and 70% of the women) when they reentered education, the larger pro-

portion of divorced women is significant, particularly in light of the larger numerical enrollments of women among adult students. In the rural communities more women students than men students were married. This contrasts with the predominately urban communities, where a greater percentage of the men students were married.

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION BY MARITAL STATUS

Percentages of students by status groups

	Women	Men	Total
Married (or remarried)	70%	80%	74%
Divorced or widowed	19	6	15
Single	10	15	12

Columns total 100% with allowance for rounding numbers.

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

Most of the mid-career persons who had reentered education were at the same time supporting children still living at home. Seventy-eight percent of all respondents (69% of the women and 31% of the men students) reported that they were parents of children still living at home. More than half of all the students were supporting families of two to four children (see Table 3).

Education Levels

There was considerable diversity in the levels of education attained by these mid-career students. The majority of the students had taken or were taking some education beyond high school. More women than men mid-career students had less than collegiate associate (2-year) degrees. The educational

Table 3

NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME

Percentages of students with numbers of children at home

	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	6 or more
Women students	20%	9%	30%	17%	12%	6%	6%
Men students	26%	16%	27%	18%	7%	4%	2%
All students	22%	12%	28%	18%	10%	6%	4%

distribution for rural students tended to be bi-modal, with somewhat larger percentages towards the low end as well as the upper end of the education continuum. This is probably a reflection of the fact that 20-year community college opportunities had not been available in two of the predominantly rural case study areas prior to very recent years. Thus more rural adults had high school diplomas or less, or some had gone on to complete collegiate 4-year degrees, usually away from home (see Table 4).

Income

The gross family incomes of these students varied greatly. Ten percent of those questioned indicated that their incomes were below the poverty level ($5,000 at the time). The average gross family income of all students was in the neighborhood of $18,500. Marked differences were found between rural and urban communities with 50% of the students from urban areas indicating that their income was over $20,000 as contrasted to only 30% of those from the rural settings. Twenty percent of the respondents from the rural areas indicated they were making less than $7,000 annually, as compared to only 12% in the urban areas.

Table 4

EDUCATION LEVELS

Percentage of all students by highest level of education attained

	Students	
	Women	Men
Elementary school or less	0%	1%
Some high school	2	2
High school diploma	14	5
Some college or training	40	33
Associate degree	18	29
Bachelor's degree	11	16
Some graduate school	6	8
Master's degree	3	3
Doctoral or professional degree	0	1
Other	6	3

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

Because there are so many more single women than men among adult mid-career students, and these with generally lower education levels and with lower-paying jobs, there were three times as many women than men with family incomes below $5,000 and twice as many with incomes of less than $12,000 annually.

Present Work Status

The majority of the respondents were employed full-time. Eighty-six percent of the men and 47% of the women worked full-time, while 23% of the women and 6% of the men worked part-time. Ninety-four percent of the married

women students indicated their spouses were employed, and 52% of the married men students indicated their wives were working. These data reflect the growing phenomenon of dual family incomes.

By and large, most of the students in this total population were not long-entrenched in their present occupations. The majority of both women and men students had held their present jobs for five years or less, or they were not presently employed at the time of the survey (Table 5).

Table 5

YEARS HELD PRESENT JOB

Percentages of students by length of employment on present job

	Women	Men
Not presently employed	27%	12%
1 - 5 years	41	41
5 - 10 years	18	24
10+ years	14	22

The persons who indicated "not presently employed" in response to the question "How long have you held your present job?" are comprised of those who responded "unemployed" to the questions on present work status plus many from those who also responded "homemaker" and "volunteer" to the work status question.

By the time they had reentered education to prepare themselves for a career change or some other transition in their life's work or personal development these mid-career people were found to be already highly mobile in their occupational patterns. Fully half of the adult students surveyed had

already changed jobs three or more times and nearly one-fourth of them had changed jobs five or more times (Table 6).

Table 6

TIMES CHANGED JOBS SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL

Percentage of students, by number of times they have changed jobs

	Women	Men
None	18%	16%
Once	13	16
Twice	15	17
Three times	18	20
Four times	13	9
Five or more times	22	22

In spite of their high job mobility, somewhat more than half of the mid-career students indicated satisfaction with the job they were presently holding or the last job they held (Table 7).

Table 7

SATISFACTION WITH PRESENT JOB

Percentages of students indicating satisfaction with their present job

	Women	Men
Definitely satisfied	23%	28%
Satisfied	33	37
Neither satisfied/dissatisfied	21	19
Dissatisfied	16	11
Definitely dissatisfied	7	6

Although, as will be pointed out later, most of these people desired to change their work situation either through entering new careers/lines of work or through advancing within their existing job situation, they appeared to be more or less satisfied with their work experiences. They were motivated to improve their situations and appeared to be doing this from a base of some satisfaction with their present or past work.

Outlook on Life and Work

The desire for change in their life patterns and for upward mobility in their jobs, in spite of a certain satisfaction with their present jobs, is further seen in the responses to the inquiry: "In summary, how would you describe your overall situation at this point in your life?" (Table 8). Respondents were asked to check the one statement that most nearly described their present situation.

Table 8

DESCRIPTIONS OF PRESENT SITUATION IN LIFE

Percentage of students responding to the following statements

	Women	Men
"Not much has changed for me in the past several years, and I do not see any reason or circumstances for a change."	7%	14%
"I am definitely making some changes in my life and/or work."	48	43
"I have just come through a major transition period of my life and/or work."	19	16
"I am now making an appraisal ('sizing up') of my present life to see if I should make some changes."	25	28

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

For many persons their decision to reenter education was regarded as a major transition they had "just come through." Many others responded elsewhere that their major transition had been a divorce or a loss of employment. As will be shown later on, many persons had reentered education as a part of the procedure of appraising (or "sizing up") their present lives. They hoped that more education would help this process and help them formulate more definite goals which they would then pursue. This will be seen to account for the rather large proportion of persons taking general education courses for personal enrichment and development (Table 8).

This mid-career student population was definitely optimistic about the future. Fewer than 10 percent of the adult students considered the quality of the past five years of their lives to be better than the present. The vast majority believed that the quality of the next five years would be better than the present (Table 9).

Reentering Education

The "important" reasons mid-career students gave for their original decision to reenter school were not always related to career change--or even to their present or prospective jobs. The simple fact that the educational opportunity was available to them, in the seven case study communities, had a major bearing on that decision. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

It is significant to note at this point that 94% of all students listed the opportunity "for personal enrichment, personal development, or to increase their general knowledge" was either very important or somewhat important. Other personal reasons for college reentry are shown in Table 10.

Table 9

PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE

Percentage of students responding to the following statements

PAST	Women	Men
"The past 5 years of my life were better than the present."	9%	10%
"...the same as the present."	41	41
"...not as good as the present."	50	49
FUTURE	**Women**	**Men**
"I feel the next 5 years of my life will be better than the present."	83%	80%
"...the same as the present."	15	18
"...not as good as the present."	2	2

Opportunities and Barriers

It has already been noted that a spirit of optimism was evident in the attitudes of these students toward their lives and toward taking new risks. The majority felt they had a good sense of control over their own lives at this point and that a career or job change would be an exciting opportunity. They expected to find a better job and were seeking it because of their own career ambitions; they felt their own talents and abilities would be more appreciated if they moved to new lines of work. The majority did not feel that making a career change would be a financial hardship, although they recognized that it would call for sacrifices. The majority did not anticipate a lack of jobs in the fields they were changing toward, nor were they unable to define their goals. They were not hesitant about taking new risks. Sex,

Table 10

REASONS FOR REENTERING SCHOOLING

Percentage of students indicating reasons that were "very important" or "somewhat important"

Reasons	% of all students
"Opportunity for personal enrichment/ development/general knowledge"	94%
"To satisfy a personal desire for a college degree"	77
"The way to meet requirements of my job"	42
"My family wanted me to go"	35
"My employer wanted me to go"	16
"I had friends taking this program"	16

Note: Many persons responded with multiple reasons.

Significant at .01 level.

age, and ethnicity did not loom as major barriers to change. (See Table 11.)

There were some interesting differences between women's and men's attitudes about these issues that reflected their realistic attitudes about their overall situation. Women were more likely than men to feel lack of experience and credentials were barriers to change. They were also more likely to feel that change would require real sacrifice.

They seemed to feel that these barriers could be overcome and that it would pay off in the long run, since they were also more likely than men to feel they could earn more money if they changed careers, to feel that their talents and abilities would be appreciated if they made the change, and to

seek job changes that met their own goals. They were also more likely to feel sex was a barrier to change and to fear that jobs would not be available once they made the change. Their motivation to change is clear however, since they are also more likely than men to desire more job security and more status. Men in contrast were more likely to think they could not financially afford to make a career change, which may explain their greater interest in advancement in their present careers rather than change to new lines of work. This interpretation fits with the overall view of the men mid-career changers as tending toward stability in life and work when compared to women. In part, this may be because of the financial pressures of supporting their families.

Table 11

PERCEPTIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

Percentages of all students responding to the following statements

	Great deal like me	Somewhat like me	Not at all like me	Not applicable
I expect to find a better job than the one I have now.	43%	26%	8%	23%
I feel rather apprehensive about making a career/job change.	14	35	35	17
I feel that a career/job change would be an exciting opportunity for me.*	51	30	7	12
I feel my own lack of experience is a problem in making a career change.*	16	25	39	20
I feel I lack the credentials necessary for a career change.*	14	20	19	47
I think I can make more money in the long run if I change my line of work now/soon.*	16	15	16	53

Table 11 Continued

PERCEPTIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

Percentages of all students responding to the following statements

	Great deal like me	Some-what like me	Not at all like me	Not appli-cable
I am now in a fairly good financial position to go ahead with a change of career/line of work.*	18	30	27	24
I really do not think I can financially afford to change to a new career.***	7	15	43	35
It is going to call for some real sacrifices but I want to/need to go ahead to a new line of work anyway.*	20	24	27	29
I feel my own talents and abilities will be more appreciated if I move to a new line of work.*	34	25	20	21
I feel my age may be against me when I think about changing careers.	12	24	43	21
I have my doubts about whether there is any job available in the line of work I am thinking about.*	8	18	43	31
I think because of my ethnic background, a career change would be difficult.	2	2	41	54
I am seeking a better job because of my own career ambitions.*	45	22	13	20
I feel my sex is a barrier to the kind of career change I would like to make.*	3	7	48	42
I know about some new career opportunities that are opening up and I feel I am qualified (or can become qualified) to get into them.	27	26	16	31
I feel I need to find a new job or different line of work which offers better job security.*	16	16	35	32
I feel that I ought to change my line of work, but actually I am unable to define my goals.	11	21	42	26

Table 11 Continued

PERCEPTIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

Percentages of all students responding to the following statements

	Great deal like me	Some-what like me	Not at all like me	Not appli-cable
I am hesitant about taking any new risks.	11	28	45	16
I simply got tired of the same old line of work and decided to change it.**	15	23	28	33
I would like to change to a career/line of work that has more status.*	23	24	32	21
I feel I have a good sense of control over my own life at this point.	57	36	6	2

*Females higher, significant at .01 level.

**Females higher, significant at .05 level.

***Males higher, significant at .01 level.

IV

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

The mid-career persons who had reentered education strongly indicated that they were transition-oriented in their lives as well as in their career patterns.

Forty-six percent (52% of the women and 35% of the men) felt that their personal lives were in a period of transition. Fifty-five percent of these students (60% of the women and 45% of the men) responded that they felt they were in a period of transition in relation to their occupational careers.

The Four Types of Mid-Career Students:

In addition to being asked if they felt they were in a period of transition or stability, respondents were asked to describe their career plans (Table 12). The questionnaire asked respondents to identify themselves with one of five statements which were designed to classify them either as a present career changer (i.e., now changing or preparing to change to a new line of work with either a new employer or with their present employer), as a potential career changer (a person who would like to change to a new line of work at some future time), as a career upgrader (a person who is working for an advancement in his or her present career/line of work), or as a non-changer (one who prefers to stay on the present job or career for the foreseeable future).

It is interesting to note that the mid-career student population divided itself almost evenly into the four groups: the present career changers with 27% (29% of the women and 24% of the men); the potential career changers with 25% (29% of the women and 17% of the men); the career upgraders with 23% (18% of the women and 32% of the men); and the non-changers with 25% (24% of the

women and 27% of the men). The fifty-four percent who stated that they were in a period of transition related to their careers are undoubtedly in the first two groups. Those who felt their careers were more stable were found in the latter two groups.

Table 12

TYPOLOGY OF CAREER CHANGERS

Percentages of all men and women students who identified themselves with one of four categories of career change goals

Change Category	Women	Men	Total
1. Presently changing careers	24%	16%	21%
Presently changing to new line of work, but with present employer	5	8	6
2. Would like future change of career (potential changer)	29	17	25
3. Working for advancement in present career with same or new employer (career upgrader)	18	32	23
4. No change of job or career in foreseeable future	24	27	25

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

Planning for Career Change

The majority of the students had been actively involved in planning for career change (Table 13). Over half had been planning a career change for some time and had planned additional education to prepare for change. Fifty percent of the women and 4 percent of the men had sought information from people in their career change area; and slightly less than half of both men and women had actually developed systematic plans of courses to accomplish career changes. Women were more likely than men to have thought about a

career change for some time, to have sought advice from a counselling center at a college or university, or used a local community career planning service, and to have actively sought assistance in making the change. Men, in contrast, were less likely to have done methodical career planning and a little more

Table 13

EXPERIENCES IN PLANNING FOR CAREER CHANGE

Percentages of students who indicated they had undertaken various planning steps

	Women	Men
No planning**	11%	19%
Thinking about planning a career change for some time**	62	52
Looked over lists of jobs that might interest me	39	33
Learned about possible new careers through previous work experiences	32	37
Sought information from state employment office*	14	10
Sought information from people now in chosen career(s)	50	44
Actively sought to expand my knowledge of different career options**	34	25
Looked into agencies that offer job skills training	10	8
Sought advice of college in area**	43	16
Used local agency offering career planning services**	13	5
Planned additional education to prepare for career change	69	67
Developed systematic education plan to accomplish career change	46	44
Presently taking courses which are part of education plan for career change	57	58
Filed job applications which should lead to new career	19	19

*Significant at .05 level.
**Significant at .01 level.

likely to have relied upon knowledge gained from previous work experience.

The overall pattern for mid-career change that emerges from these data was optimistic. People were not just randomly changing jobs at will, but instead they had actually gone out and done the necessary career planning. It was found that fully three-fourths of the students were oriented toward improving their work situations or changing careers. Usually the career changes were for personal satisfaction. Women were more likely than men to be changing careers, but they were also more aware that the changes involved personal risk; more likley to have been actively involved in their planning process; and more likely to have been using available human, community, and state resources in making their plans for a career change. Men, in contrast, were less likey to have committed themselves to a career change and to have used local resources in the planning process. They were also more likely to feel financial pressures to remain in the same career area.

Attitudes about Career Change

Looking at individuals within the structure-changing period, it was found that attitudes about changes differed according to whether the person was an actual changer or a potential changer. The potential changer perceived certain barriers to change that were not being experienced by the present changer (Table 14).

For example, the potential career changers tend to be less self-confident (they felt they did not have a good sense of control over their lives at this time). Approximately 60% indicated they were hesitant about taking new risks, and said they would be apprehensive about making a career change. Even though they knew they ought to change their careers, they were unable to define their goals and felt their own lack of experience would be a problem in

making a career change. These attitudes were not significant barriers to career changers. Nor were these barriers particularly relevant to the non-changers or career upgraders.

Table 14

ATTITUDES ABOUT CAREER CHANGE

Percentages of students who indicate "somewhat" or "a lot like me"

FACTOR I	Career changer	Potential career changer	Career advancer	Career non-changer
Hesitant about taking risks	26%	56%	36%	38%
Unable to define goals	22	61	19	24
Apprehensive about change	42	64	45	43
Lack of experience is problem	43	60	30	30
FACTOR II				
Personal career ambitions	82%	74%	73%	37%
Talents will be appreciated	81	75	47	29
Change exciting opportunity	95	92	80	55
Expect to find better job	82	73	76	43
Change requires real sacrifice	66	54	31	17
Want career with more status	59	52	48	26
Need better job security	41	43	27	17
Opportunities opening up	64	47	67	36
Tired of job--decided to change	50	48	28	25

In order to highlight the motivations and incentives for career change, the present changers were compared with the non-changers, neither of whom are so encumbered by the barriers experienced by the potential changer.

Over 80% of the career changers had the ambition to find a better job. Fewer than 40% of the non-changers had such ambitions.

Over 80% of the changers felt their talents and abilities would be more appreciated in a new job. Less than 30% of the non-changers had this confidence in their ability. Ninety-five percent of the changers felt that a career change would be an exciting opportunity, but only 55% of the non-changers held this opinion. Over 80% of the changers expected to find a better job, but only around 40% of the non-changers felt this to be the case.

Two-thirds of the changers realized that change would require some real sacrifices but knew they needed to change anyway, while less than two in ten non-changers felt this way.

Sixty percent of the changers wanted a career that had more status, as contrasted to 25% of the non-changers.

Forty percent of the present changers felt the need for job security, as compared to 17% of the non-changers. (Job security also loomed as important to 43% of the potential changers.)

Almost two-thirds of the present changers, as well as of the potential changers, indicated they knew about some new career opportunities and felt qualified to get into them. Only one-third of the non-changers knew of new careers they felt they were qualified to enter.

Half of the career changers indicated they were tired of the same old line of work and wished to change it, while only a quarter of the non-changers felt this to be the case for them.

The difference in aspirations of the four types of career perspectives does have implications for the types of counseling needs of different indivi-

duals in different types of stability or transition. For example the active changer who is presently in transition has moved past the barriers that might seem insurmountable to the potential changer who is only "sizing up" his or her present situation. On the other hand, the individual now in a period of stability who has recently experienced a major transition or who has maintained a stability over time will be seeking yet another and more enriching type of experience rather than one of reappraisal and self-exploration.

Career Plannings Steps

The mid-career changers and potential changers have been actively planning their own lives for possible change in careers. Ninety percent of the changers and 75% of the potential changers have planned additional education that would prepare them for a career change (Table 15). However, only 30% of the potential changers, as compared to 70% of the present changers, have actually developed a systematic plan of college courses to accomplish their career objectives.

A majority of the career upgraders have planned additional courses and are presently taking courses that relate directly to their advancement. Even though half of the non-changers have planned additional education, only a third of this group are presently taking courses that relate directly to career aspirations.

Ages and Life-Work Transitions

The survey data also shows that people of all ages are undergoing transitions in both their life and work.

There is increasing literature on adult development that theorizes about periods of stability and transition (referred to as "life-phases") in adult life. A case in point is Levinson's Seasons of a Man's Life and

Table 15

CAREER PLANNING BY TYPES OF CHANGERS

Career Planning	Career changer	Potential career changer	Career advancer	Career non-changer
Have done no planning	1%	1%	16%	41%
Thinking about planning	82	77	47	24
Developed systematic plan	69	32	49	28
Planned additional education	88	66	71	48
Presently taking courses	79	53	63	31
Career Advice				
Career information from people in career area	67	43	53	26
Looked over job lists	45	48	37	16
Sought advice through a center	48	39	30	18
Learned about possible career changes	34	26	52	25
Actively sought advice	45	30	30	17

Lowenthal's Four Stages of Life where it is hypothesized that the changes during one of life's phases may foreshadow changes in the life structure and these changes may continue with various degrees of intensity throughout the adult life cycle. Thus, the life structure evolves through a sequence of alternating periods. "A relatively stable structure-building period is followed by a transitional structure-changing period. The major developmental tasks of the structure-building period are to make crucial choices, to enrich the structure, and to pursue one's goals within it. During the transitional

structure-changing period the major tasks are to reappraise the existing structure, explore new possibilities in the self and the world, and work towards choices that provide a basis for a new structure." Levinson observed that the structure-building periods ordinarily extend over six to eight years, while the transitional periods are generally only four or five years in duration.

This literature further suggests that stability and transition periods are age related and that relatively brief periods of life crisis or transition, such as the age thirty transition, are followed by periods of relative stability. The survey suggests that some types of change are indeed age related. For example, when people were grouped into age related categories, it was found that middle-aged adults were most likely to consider themselves as being in stable periods of life and work. However, it was also found that people of all ages were experiencing transitions and that their perceptions of the types of transitions they were epxeriencing were good indicators of the degree to which they woud be actively involved in using community resources in planning for career changes.

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the authors constructed four categories of stability and transition. The first group of students were those who considered themselves to be in a period of stability in both their lives and in their work. The second considered themselves in transition periods in their work, but in stable periods of their lives. The third considered themselves to be in transition in their lives but to be in stable periods of their work. And the fourth considered themselves in transition periods in both their lives and their work. The information on respondents' ages was grouped according to the Gould (1972) "life phase categories" and the

stability/transition data corresponding to these age groups is shown in Table 16.

Table 16

CATEGORIES OF STABILITY-TRANSITION RESPONSES

Percentage of responses, by age groups and by sex, grouped in four categories

By Age Groups*	I Stability in life and work	II Transition in work/stable in life	III Transition in life/stable in work	IV Transition in both life and work
18 - 22	19%	24%	9%	48%
23 - 28	24	22	12	42
29 - 34	30	26	11	33
35 - 43	34	23	10	34
44 - 50	42	15	12	31
Over 50	42	16	15	27
By Sex**				
Women	27%	22%	13%	38%
Men	46	19	9	25

*Significant at .02 level.

**Significant at or beyond .001 level.

Most respondents to the questionnaire considered themselves to be transitioning in one or both areas (Categories II, III, and IV). However, there were some interesting age and sex related differences in the self-perceptions of men and women and for people in different age groups. Table 16 provides breakdowns for the population by age and sex for each of the four stability/transition categories.

Women were more likely to consider themselves to be in periods of transition in life and in work than men (73 percent of the women and 54 percent of the men). The over 44 age groups were the most stable overall, but the majority of these age groups considered themselves to be undergoing some type of transition. There was also a tendency for younger adults, ages 20-28, to consider themselves in transition in both life and work.

When people in each of the four stability/transition categories were examined, it was found that those who considered themselves to be in periods of stability in both life and work were the least likely to do any career planning (see Table 17). They also made less use of all available resources such as counselling or other available information or advice. Those people who considered themselves to be in transition in one or both were much more likely to be actively involved in career planning, to make use of local resources, to apply for new jobs, and to develop systematic plans for their education.

Further, it was found that there was some differentiation within the three transition categories on these same items. Those adults who considered themselves to be in periods of transition in their work (Category II) and in both work and life (Category IV) were more likely to be actively involved in planning for career changes than those who were transitioning only in their life.

These data show that people's perceptions of their situations are important indicators of how active they are likely to be in planning for career changes. Although there are obvious patterns of stability and transition that are associated with movement through the life cycle, there is evidence that people of all ages are experiencing life and work transitions. Further, it

Table 17

PLANNING STEPS BY STABILITY/TRANSITION CATEGORIES

Percentages of total students in each stability/transition category who indicated they had taken various planning steps

	I Stability in life and work	II Transition in work/stable in life	III Transition in life/stable in work	IV Transition in both life and work
No planning	31%	7%	16%	2%
Thinking about planning a career change for some time	35	69	57	77
Looked over lists of jobs that might interest me	24	39	36	48
Learned about possible new careers through previous work experiences	28	41	34	38
Sought information from State Employment Office	5	17	12	18
Sought information from people now in chosen careers(s)	31	54	50	61
Actively sought to expand my knowledge of different career options	16	36	28	43
Looked into agencies that offer job skills training	5	11	9	14
Sought advice of college in area	21	38	34	45
Used local agency offering career planning services	4	12	8	16
Planned additional education to prepare for career change	54	79	60	79
Developed systematic education plan to accomplish career change	32	60	38	51
Presently taking courses which are part of education plan for career change	43	69	51	66
Filed job applications which should lead to new career	12	23	16	26

was found that people who are in transition, especially those who are in work transitions, are most likely to be actively involved in career planning and to utilize available community resources to facilitate these changes.

Career Goals and Directions of Change

In the Survey persons were asked a number of questions related to their present occupations, the occupation they would like to change to, their educational preparation (in high school or the first time they went to college), their first jobs, their first adult career goals and their present career goals. In each case, these were "open-ended" questions allowing the respondent to answer in his/her own words. In order to codify these replies into standard nomenclatures, the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), Fourth Edition, 1977, U.S. Department of Labor, was employed. This compendium lists, codifies, and defines most jobs and areas of specialization extant in the United States. This instrument lent itself to codifying the areas of educational preparation (major study in high school or college). If a person "majored" in forestry or business or agriculture, the classification was obvious; if the respondent replied that the major was social sciences, this was found as a division listing Occupations in the Social Sciences under Professional Occupations (see below). While such a repsondent may take a job in Clerical and Sales Occupations, the intent of that major can only be judged as preparation for one of the many jobs listed under Professional Occupations in the Social Sciences.

Certain of the occupational categories in DOT were combined into a single category labeled, Craftsmen and Non-Farm Occupations, as indicated below.

So that a reader will be familiar with the terminology used in these occupational descriptions, the following are the categories (first digit),

along with examples of some of the divisions (second digit), and some of the groups (third digit).

1/ PROFESSIONAL, TECHNICAL, AND MANAGERIAL OCCUPATIONS

-/01 Occupations in architecture, engineering, surveying

/005 Civil engineering occupations

-/05 Occupations in the social sciences

/050 Occupations in economics

-/07 Occupations in medicine and health

/075 Licensed nurses

-/16 Occupations in administrative specializations

/160 Accountants and auditors

01/19 Miscellaneous professional, technical, managerial occupations

/193 Radio operators

/195 Probation officers

/197 Ship captains, mates, pilots, engineers

/198 Railroad conductors

2/ CLERICAL AND SALES OCCUPATIONS

-/20 Stenography, filing, and related occupations

/206 File clerks

-/26 Sales occupations - consumable commodities

/261 Sales of textiles, apparel, notions

3/ SERVICE OCCUPATIONS

-/31 Food and beverage preparation and service

/312 Bartenders

-/35 Miscellaneous personal service occupations

/354 Unlicensed birth attendants and practical nurses

4/ ("FARMING") AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND RELATED OCCUPATIONS

-/40 Plant farming occupations

-/45 Forestry occupations

5/ CRAFTSMEN AND NON-FARM OCCUPATIONS

(Consolidation of categories for Processing Occupations, [e.g. electroplating], Machine Trades [e.g. metalworking], Benchwork [e.g. assembly, fabrication], Structural Work [e.g. welders, carpenters], and Miscellaneous Occupations [e.g. transportation and freight-bus and truck drivers, motion picture projectionists, photoengraving, etc.])

On the basis of the student response data, it is clear that the mid-career student population is upwardly mobile and that their ambitions point them towards the professional, managerial, and technical careers (Table 18). For example, 33 percent of the women students had their first jobs in the professional-technical-managerial career line (perhaps as teachers or nurses). Fifty-five percent of the women are now in this career line, and 88 percent want to continue in it or change to it. On the other hand, 19 percent of the men started out in a sales or clerical position; only 9 percent are still in that career line, and only 4 percent have future plans in that career line.

Most students originally prepared themselves with education in high school or college major subjects that would point them towards careers in the professional-technical-managerial career line. They majored in social sciences or economics and they studied business administration, accounting, or nursing. They had this career as their first adult career goal (Table 19). Although their first jobs were in other occupations (Table 18), they have continued to hold aspirations to enter the professional-technical-managerial career line (Tables 18 and 19).

Table 18

FIRST-CURRENT-FUTURE CAREERS

Percentages of mid-career students, by first and present occupations, and by planned future careers

	First full-time occupation		Current occupation		Future career plans	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Professional, technical, managerial	33%	23%	55%	59%	88%	84%
Clerical, sales	47	19	22	9	7	4
Services	14	26	20	16	4	6
Craftsmen	5	27	3	12	1	7
Farming	1	5	1	4	1	2

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

Table 19

EDUCATION AND CAREER GOALS

Percentages of students by education/occupation preparation, first and present career goals

	Educational preparation		First adult career goal		Present career goal	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Professional, technical, managerial	93%	94%	74%	66%	90%	86%
Clerical, sales	5	1	13	2	7	4
Services	1	1	12	14	2	4
Craftsmen	1	2	0	12	1	2
Farming	0	2	1	8	1	3

Significant at or beyond .01 level.

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